

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART AND THE LOUVRE; CLEVELAND PAINTING TO BE REUNITED WITH RECENTLY REDISCOVERED COMPANIONPIECE

Objects from The Cleveland Museum of Art will figure prominently in two upcoming international exhibitions organized by The Louvre, The Age of Charles the Fifth and French Paintings of the Seventeenth Century from American Collections. Previous collaborations between the two institutions have included such major exhibitions as The European Vision of America and Chardin 1699-1799. The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing, 1830-1900 also entailed extensive cooperation. Highlights among the Museum's loans to the current exhibitions are a fragile table fountain from the 14th century which has only travelled once since its acquisition in 1924 and the first joint public showing of Valentin de Boulogne's Samson with its recently rediscovered companionpiece (see below).

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The Age of Charles the Fifth, on view at the Grand Palais in Paris from October 10, 1981, to the end of January, 1982, offers an excellent opportunity to examine the impact of royal and princely patronage in fourteenth-century France. The reign of Charles V (1364-1380) marked the turning point for France in the Hundred Years' War with England. A man whose poor health led him to prefer diplomacy to the battlefield, Charles, along with his chivalrous father, John the Good, and his brothers, the dukes of Berry, Bourgogne, and Anjou, fostered letters and the crafting of exquisite objects of art and illuminated manuscripts such as the renowned Très Riches Heures.

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Seven objects from The Cleveland Museum of Art will be among the important works in this exhibition. They reflect princely support for religious foundations as well as for pleasurable pursuits. Six sculptures from monasteries, churches, and chapels typify the refined style cultivated in royal circles. Contrasting with the elegant simplicity of these figures is the seventh piece, an elaborate gold table fountain which graced the banquet table of a prince, perhaps John the Good himself. A hydraulic device powered the interplay between water--or perhaps vintage wines--and silver-gilt beasts, heraldic devices, bells, wheels, arches, turrets, and enameled scenes.

Dr. Patrick de Winter, the Museum's curator of Early Western Art, has accompanied these delicate objects to Paris and there will participate in a symposium connected with the exhibition.

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American museums hold some of the best paintings by seventeenth-century French artists. In recognition of this fact and of increased American appreciation for these masters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Louvre are cooperating to assemble from American collections a panorama of the varied genres and styles of the period for the appreciation of both the French and American publics. French Paintings of the Seventeenth Century from American Collections will be shown at the Grand Palais, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Art Institute of Chicago throughout 1982.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is contributing four excellent examples of seventeenth-century French painting. The Repentant St. Peter by Georges de La Tour (1593-1652) is one of only two paintings signed and dated by this artist and is therefore indispensable to the study of his works. The brooding Samson by Valentin de Boulogne (1594-1632) will be shown publicly for the first time with

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its recently rediscovered companionpiece, David (see below). In 1979, Pierre Rosenberg, curator of paintings at the Louvre and co-organizer of the exhibition, confirmed the Museum's Landscape with Nymphs and Satyrs to be an early work by the great master, Nicholas Poussin (1594-1656). The Kiss of Peace and Justice by Laurent de La Hyre (1606-1656) is also being loaned. Major currents in seventeenth-century painting are represented by the influence of Caravaggio in the dark, expressive power of Valentin and La Tour; the luminous landscape style of La Hyre; and the lyrical classicism of early Poussin.

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CLEVELAND PAINTING TO BE REUNITED WITH RECENTLY REDISCOVERED COMPANIONPIECE

The French Paintings exhibition marks the first time the Cleveland Museum's Samson will rejoin its companionpiece David for a public showing. Valentin, among the finest of the followers of the Italian master Caravaggio, originally executed the two works for Francesco Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII. The bee, the Barberini family's insignia, appears as a clasp on Samson's shoulder in the Cleveland painting. An 1812 marriage agreement split up these two works, with both paintings remaining in private collections, largely lost from public view until quite recently.

Samson was brought to the public's attention in the 1971 exhibition, Caravaggio and his Followers, organized for The Cleveland Museum of Art by guest curator, Professor Richard E. Spear of Oberlin College. The Museum acquired the painting from its private owner the following year. At that time, the David was presumed lost. But in February of 1980, Ann Lurie, the Museum's curator of paintings, received a letter from Michael Brunner, a graduate student in art history, informing her of his fortuitous discovery of the painting in a California antique store.

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A student of the Caravaggisti, or followers of Caravaggio, Brunner was attracted by the painting's size, style, and subject matter despite its very poor condition. Initial research suggested the identity of the painting, but Brunner had to pursue it for two months through another buyer, who had purchased it immediately without knowing its value.

Dr. Thomas Kren, now an assistant curator of paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum, confirmed the painting to be Valentin's lost David. Richard Spear and Pierre Rosenberg were also consulted. The identification was secured by the resemblance between this painting and an earlier photograph of it, by the stylistic affinities between this work and others by Valentin, and by the similarity between nineteenth-century additions to the height of both the David and the Samson which had concealed the Caravaggesque compactness of both works.

After studying the Cleveland painting extensively, Gabriel Kopelman of New York is restoring the David in preparation for the French Paintings exhibition.

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